



AGENDA ITEM: 8

CABINET: 18 June 2013

**CORPORATE & ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 11 July 2013**

Report of: Transformation Manager

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor I Grant

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SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS MONITORING

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present data on complaints received by the Council from April 2012 to March 2013.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That the complaints data for April 2012 to March 2013 be noted.

2.2 That the call in procedure is not appropriate for this item as the report is being submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11th July 2013.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.1 That the report be noted.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Types, numbers and trends in complaints provide a valuable insight into the quality of services and can make a valuable contribution to improving them. In this respect they should also be considered alongside other information such as performance indicators and securing value for money.
- 4.2 In order to contextualise this report and particularly the number of complaints recorded, the reader's attention should be drawn to the vast number of interactions the Council has with its customers/stakeholders across all of its service areas in any one year. For example, within Customer Services alone, there are around 204,000 contacts made each year. As a further means of scale, Street Scene Services are responsible for carrying out 3,715,764 domestic refuse and recycling collections per annum. Further detailed information can also be found at 5.4 below. It should also be noted that consultation with residents reveals a positive level of satisfaction with the services the Council provides and this is also during times of higher levels of interaction with certain service areas and within the climate of rising customer expectations.
- 4.3 The Council has defined a complaint as being a written expression of dissatisfaction with the quality of a service provided by the Council. Or to put it another way, when someone claims the Council has:
- failed to do something they should have done;
 - done something badly or in the wrong way,
 - or the complainant feels they have been treated unfairly or discourteously

The complaints procedure is therefore not simply logging initial service requests, e.g. – for pest control, missed refuse collections, housing repairs etc.

- 4.4 The Customer Services team is responsible for managing overall co-ordination of the corporate complaints process.
- 4.5 If a complainant wishes to pursue an issue further after the Council's own internal procedures have been exhausted, this can be raised with either the Local Government Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman, depending on the nature of the complaint. The Ombudsman will then carry out their own investigations.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The principal purpose of monitoring and responding to complaints is always to improve services. On the occasions where the Council acknowledged service should have been better, the focus is on putting the matter right AND preventing any re-occurrence. Even in those instances where actions have been in line with policies and procedures trends are now further examined corporately with input from staff, in order to improve service delivery.
- 5.2 This report provides Members with an update of complaints received during 2012/13. Data on the number of complaints, received by each section during this period is set out in Appendix 1 to this report. The numbers recorded are all written expressions of dissatisfaction and are not necessarily substantiated.

5.3 The figures for 2012/13 show an increase of 15 in the number of complaints received, when compared with 2011/12, i.e. from 107 in 2011/12 to 122 in 2012/13. Following investigation, it was established that 61 of the 122 received were without merit i.e. the Council had complied with its own policies and procedures. Further details regarding the nature of the specific complaints are provided at Appendix 1.

5.4 Whilst the number of complaints received has increased slightly, these statistics should be put into perspective. As an example Street Scene Services received 16 complaints regarding refuse & recycling collections, although given that there are approximately 50,000 residential properties in the borough, this shows that 99.9% of residents are satisfied with the collection service. In relation to Planning services, 1148 applications were determined during this period and 14 complaints were received, which represents 1.21%. In 13 of these cases, it was found that correct procedures were followed.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

6.1 The information set out in this report aims to help the Council to improve service performance and helps to further improve good quality services that are easily accessible to all.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no current financial or resource implications arising from this report. Improving service delivery will prevent any unnecessary additional expenditure associated with 'putting things right', particularly if the problem is a recurring one.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 Monitoring and managing complaints identifies areas where improvement to services may be required to prevent re-occurrence and helps to prevent these issues being escalated to the Ombudsman.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

9.1 The figures demonstrate that where there have been genuine complaints/issues these have been dealt with accordingly and wherever possible, improvements have been made to prevent re-occurrence. Regular meetings will continue to be held with service Complaints co-ordinators to help further ensure that additional improvements to service delivery are introduced wherever possible.

9.2 By taking complaints seriously the Council is ensuring that all genuine grievances are recognised and action taken to address the issue.

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected Members and/or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

1. Complaints Received April 2012 to March 2013
2. Minute of Cabinet – 18 June 2013 (Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee only)